

*The Sacred Authority of Christian Bishops, and
the Piety of Praying for them in Prison.*

Recommended in a ¹⁴⁹⁰ p 93.

S E R M O N

Preach'd at

ROCHESTER Cathedral,

OCTOBER 7, 1722.

Dedicated to the CLERGY of the DIOCESE
of ROCHESTER.

By *CHARLES CHAMBRES*, A.M. Vicar
of DARTFORD in KENT.

*Peter therefore was kept in Prison, but Prayer was made
without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. Acts 12. 5.*

L O N D O N:

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To the REVEREND the
CLERGY
OF THE
Diocese of *ROCHESTER*.

Reverend Brethren,

IN the present unfortunate Circumstances of our Right Reverend Diocesan, I thought the best Testimony I was capable of giving, of my Duty to Him, and Friendship to You, next to my Remembering him in my own Prayers, was to Recommend him to the Devotion of all sincere Christians. The first, I earnestly and incessantly do; and the last, I have endeavour'd to do, upon the best Principles of Religion in this Sermon.

Yours

DEDICATION.

YOU will, I hope, justly perceive, that I have not publish'd it to Impeach or to Flatter the Wisdom and Justice of the Administration; neither to Conceal nor to Palliate the high Crime of Treason; but to Assert in Season, the Justness of our own Christian Principles, and to Recommend the Beauty of Humanity and Charity. With these Views, I hope I may be excused in recommending it to the Perusal of any true Christian and true Englishman; and particularly, in introducing it to their more favourable Regard, under the Publick Reputation of your Names;

I am,



Beloved and Worthy Brethren,

Your most Affectionate

and Obedient Servant,

Ch. Chambres.



ACTS XII. Verse 5.

Peter therefore was kept in Prison, but Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him.

SAINTE PETER was an Apostle, and one of the first Bishops of the Christian Church, to whom with his Brethren of the Apostolical Character, our Blessed Saviour had committed the Government of all his Disciples. Kings were not exempted from a Subjection to the Episcopal Rule, when they became subject to the Christian Faith and the Constitution of the Gospel.

AND as our Saviour dignified his Apostles with a Vicegerent Dispensation of the Gospel; so he invested them with Power sufficient to support the Dignity, and to answer all the Ends of that most eminent and sacred Trust: And

particularly to transmit their Authority to Successors in all future Ages, for the perpetual Profession of the Christian Religion, according to the uniform and original Institution of it.

THIS Station therefore of a Christian Governour, St. *Peter* was placed in, as a Pattern of the Character and Authority to be sustained and exercised by all Christian Bishops in succeeding Ages.

BUT tho' St. *Peter* was directly dignify'd with a spiritual Dominion over our Lord's Household of Faith, yet this sacred Character did not screen him from the Violence and ill Treatment of Irreligious Men. This Primitive Father and Apostle was put in Prison under a strong Guard of Soldiers, and was very soon to be sacrific'd to the Malice of the unbelieving Jews.

THE objected Crime for which he was imprisoned and to be slain, was the holy Religion of his Saviour, which he zealously professed. Which Religion as it was design'd by God, to dispel the Errors, restrain the Iniquity, and controul the Prejudices of Mankind, as well as to put an End to the *Mosaical* Dispensation, by fulfilling the Prophecies, and spiritualizing the carnal Ordinances of it, so it could not fail, especially when it was first promulged, drawing against it the Antipathy and Revenge of the Jews and Gentiles.

ACCORDINGLY our Lord himself fell a Victim of their concerted Opposition, as well



as a Sacrifice for their Sins, and was the highest Instance of the Impiety and Barbarity of wicked Men. And his Disciples according to his Predictions, sustained the *Hatred of them who hated him*, and the *Persecutions of them which persecuted him*, by the Contempt and Calumny, the bodily Smart and Imprisonment, and by the sundry kinds of Death which they endur'd after our Lord's Example and for his Truth's Sake.

So particularly in this Chapter of my Text, *Herod the King, a Gentile in Religion, stretch'd forth his Hands to vex certain of the Church; and he killed James the Brother of John with the Sword. And because it pleased the Jews he proceeded farther to take Peter also. And when he apprehended him, he put him into Prison, and deliver'd him to four Quaternions of Soldiers, (i. e. under the Centry of four military Persons in each Watch, to be relieved as their Commander directed) intending after Easter, to bring him forth to the People. Peter therefore was kept in Prison.*

BUT to relieve him under his hard Circumstances, the severe Intention of *Herod*, and the cruel Expectation of the Jews: *Prayer was made by the Church without ceasing to God for him.* When they had no visible Remedy to save their holy Bishop from the Violence intended him, they with one Consent had Recourse to Prayer, peradventure God would be Gracious, and hear their unanimous
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and fervent Supplications ; which in Fact their merciful Redeemer did, and sent his Angel to set at Liberty his chosen Apostle. In this Manner St. *Peter* was seasonably rescued by God himself, further to plant and superintend his true Religion in the World.

FROM this pious Example, and the happy Success of it, I shall in this Discourse beg leave to recommend in General the Duty and Consolation of Prayer in Times of Distress.

SECONDLY, Apply it to the particular Case of my Text, St. *Peter* in Prison.

THIRDLY, Apply it to the present unfortunate Case of the Church, as far as the different Circumstances of the Primitive and Present Condition of Christianity will innocently admit.

FIRST, I would recommend in General, the Duty and Consolation of Prayer, in Times of Distress.

THERE is nothing more immediately flows from natural Religion, than the Devotion of calling unto the Lord in Distress. God is plainly written upon the Heart of every Man, and we all by the Light of our Nature, view him there as the CREATOR, SUSTAINER, and DEFENDER of all his Creatures. Therefore when we fall into Calamity, and the deeper we sink into it, the nearer we behold him to us ; the more able we confess him to deliver

deliver us, and the louder we cry unto him for Help. This is the Language of the Atheistical, who, in the Time of their wanton Prosperity, have not God in all their Thoughts, to call upon the Lord in Distress for the Help they know he is able to extend, and which they are conscious they do not deserve. Affliction has a softening Power to subdue the Perverseness and Pride of that Heart which *goeth from its Maker*; and to bring it back to the Sense of his Sufficiency in all Things, and Forgotten Glory. Experience is a sensible Argument of our Need, and intire Dependance upon our Creator, which the Distress we feel, and cannot remedy, applies home to our Consciences, and makes us *fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker*.

AND the more publick any Calamity is, the more general ought the Application to be for Relief. The good and evil Contingencies to a Society are communicated Blessings and Curses, and extend their Influences to the extreme Bounds of the Community; and therefore ought to be solicited and deprecated with a general Voice and Prostration of Knees. For as Nature directs us to join our selves in Society, so she represents to us the Expediency, and puts us upon the Means of procuring the Advantages, and averting the Misfortunes of it. Whatever Good we do to the Society we are enfranchised in, it flows back to us again, not only in our share of the Benefit,

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augmented perhaps in its Circulation, but in the Satisfaction which accrues from the Opinion of being Benefactors, So on the contrary, whatever Evil or Detriment we effect, or occasion to the same Community, we partake of the Venom, besides the Remorse we sustain in distressing our own Body, whereof we our selves are the Members, and which liberally extends to us the social Blessings of our Communion.

UPON these Accounts our united Prayers to the all-sufficient Deity in Times of common Distress, is a natural Duty : For as he is able to deliver a private Person from his private Affliction; so He is to deliver a Community from any general Calamity. And the more Publick are the Views of our Petitions, the more Important they be, and the more likely therefore to be return'd by him who is *loving unto every Man*, and maketh *his Sun to shine*, and *his Rain to descend*, to renew the Earth of the *Just and Unjust*. And if we succeed in our general Intercession, there is a Consolation in what we have done, and an Encouragement to be constant to the same Duty upon every return of the same Occasion.

How likely we are to be benefited by such joint Devotions, I had rather refer you to Experience than to Arguments; though we have various Arguments of comfortable Consideration to incite us to such happy Experience both from Reason and Scripture.

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First, FROM Reason; Hereby we publicly honour God's *Power* and *Goodness*, and provoke him to * *honour us again* by some Distinction of his Favour. We honour his Power in postponing the Aid of all Beings, to his Assistance: We also honour his Goodness in the humble Hope and Trust our unanimous Address supposes of seasonable Relief. Hereby we acknowledge how feeble, how precarious, how *vain is the Help of Man!* How Powerful, how Exorable, how Perfect the *Help of our God!* Hereby also we intimate a just Contempt of the sinful Malice and Opposition of Men, when God is on our side. Thus confessing the infinite Allurement of the divine Goodness to incline, and the irresistible Energy of the divine Power to enable our God to *fulfil the Desires of them that fear him.*

HEREBY also we honour God's Wisdom, by the perfect Resignation of all our Desires to that divine Perfection, which knoweth our Necessities before we ask, and our Ignorance in asking, and which always fulfils the Desires and Petitions of his Servants, as is most expedient for us. Hereby having the Consolation, that God when we call upon him in the Time of Trouble, will either remove, or ease the dolorous Pungency of our Case; remove if our Patience, Resignation and Repentance are

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* 1 Sam. ii.

perfected, or continue it with a Measure of his Grace to improve these Perfections; kindly turning all the Occasions of our Afflictions into Medicines *to heal our Sickness*, or the Rewards of our *patient Continuance in well doing*.

Secondly, From Scripture. We have abundant Assurances of the Duty and Consolation of Prayer. And here, in the Old Testament, I cannot refer you to a better Witness than holy *David*, whose intimate Communication with the Spirit of God, and his habitual Exercise in Prayer, qualify him to be an unexceptionable Judge. He brings God, laying his special Injunction on his People *Israel* to this Duty, * *Call thou upon me in the Day of Trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise me*. He exemplifies the Truth of this divine Promise, by recording various Instances of divine Succours to this People for their Compliance with it, particularly in their tedious and painful Travel through the Wilderness; where, *when they called unto the Lord in their Trouble, he delivered them out of their Distress. Yea, many a time did he deliver them*. Though the Character given of this People, is, that they were a stiff-necked Generation, and a People who cleaved not stedfastly unto God, falling away like their Forefathers. † *Nevertheless,*

* Psalm l. 15.

† Psalm cvi. 44.

less, when he saw their Adversity, he heard their Complaint. He instances the same divine Goodness towards himself, *I called upon the Lord in Trouble, and the Lord heard me at Large.* He gives a general Assurance unto all Men of the like Success, ** the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, yea, all such as call upon him faithfully.*——*He also will hear their Cry, and will help them.* And in Consequence of all together, he fixes this Resolution upon himself, *† as for me I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me.*

AND if upon the foot of Nature, and the Jewish Religion, the Motives of Prayer in Times of Distress are so inviting, how much more Persuasion do they bring with them, when consider'd upon the Principles and Privileges of Christ's Religion.

No Religion so well illuminates our Minds with the Knowledge of our selves, and of God, and of our social Obligations. The three primary Inducements to divine Supplications. No Religion so well enforces a Behaviour conformable to such Knowledge, because founded on the best Promises. For though by the Light of Nature, we had some glimmering Prospect of a future State, grounded upon the absolute Equity of the divine Nature, and the promiscuous Dispensation of Things here : And
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* Psalm cxlv. 18.

† Psalm lv. 16.

though the same be shadow'd out in the typical Revelations of *Moses* and the Prophets, yet the unerring Certainty and Conditions of our immortal State was reserved to the *Demonstration of the Spirit*, by the Revelation of Christ Jesus and his Apostles, and was * *brought to Light through the Gospel*.

No Religion is besides so extensive, or so divine in the Obligations of Charity ; and consequently leads the way to the most general and disinterested Intercessions, by commanding us to Love our Adversaries of whatsoever sort, do Good to them that hate us, to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us, and to forgive Injuries receiv'd, as we wou'd be forgiven our Sins ; in short, to Love one another, as Christ hath loved us, rooting up by these Precepts of unlimited Charity the Distinctions of Parties, taming the Animosities and Resentments of Pride, Envy, Hatred, and melting down Revenge by the warmth of that heavenly Wisdom, † *which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits*.

BUT still one of the most effectual Encouragements to our divine Addresses, is the most perfect Assurance of Success in the Mediation of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*. Our Nature in her Stains of Sin cou'd not address God as she did

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

† James iii. 11.

did in her inoffensive State; she could not be sure but that *the Prayers of the Wicked* would be an *Abomination in his Sight*, and therefore look'd for the Worthiest of her Kind to intercede for her more polluted Members. The *Jews* in their revealed Religion, had Mediators in the Mosaical Priesthood, to offer up Prayers for the People, but These being in the Number of Miserable Sinners, wanted an Intercessor for themselves, and therefore were commanded to expect a more perfect Mediator, and to offer up a *Lamb without Spot* to Represent him. But now that Mediator being come in the Person of Jesus Christ, Man without Sin, dignified by Union with the Divine Nature, and in whose Name all our Petitions are to be offered up, and by his Intercession sanctified; we derive from them all the Blessings which the Love and Merit of a Divine Redeemer can procure. *For it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right Hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us * for such an High Priest became us (Sinners) who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, made higher than the Heavens. † And now we know that whatsoever we ask in his Name he will do it, that the FATHER may be Glorified in the SON.*

* Rom. viij. 34.

† Heb. vij. 26.

WHATEVER therefore Intimations the Experience of our own Insufficiency to Answer our Wants in this casual World, may suggest to us of Prayer; whatever Light our own Nature may furnish us with of the Divine Perfections, *to direct our Prayer unto him*, and to look up, as to a Being most able and inclined to Understand and Fullfil it: Or whatever Sentiments we have of Publick Virtue, from the Experience of the Priviledges derived from Society, to engage our Publick Intercessions, in Publick Distresses; and whatever Assurances the Practice of Divine Prayer in Times of Old, and Divine Revelations of the Jewish Prophets, give of the Success of Prayer, these Reasons are all better enforced by the Revelations of the Gospel.

Now the Duty of Prayer is more excellent in it's Motives, in it's Views, and in it's Nature, and is become a more important, more divine, more delightful, and more successful Duty; it draws us *near* to God, and gives us the Complacency of beholding the Glory of his Perfections; it draws Him *near to us*, and gives us the Consolation of feeling the beneficial Influences of them: In our gloomy Intervals it refreshes us with the Joy of his Countenance; in Distress, it is a present Relief: If we Use it frequently, it is a Testimony of our Piety; if we apply it to the Advantage of our Neighbour, it is an Argument of our Charity; if we extend it to the Publick Welfare upon all

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Occasions, we exercise that Disposition which our Saviour and his Apostles recommend, of *doing Good unto all Men, and especially to them who are of the Household of Faith, i.e.* we approve our selves profitable Members of the Universal Society of Mankind, and particularly Sincere and Wise in the Service of our Church and Country. Upon these important Encouragements, I proceed,

Secondly, To apply the Piety of Christian Prayer to the particular Case in my Text, St. *Peter* in Prison.

THAT St. *Peter* was expressly consign'd to a Governing Capacity in Christ's Catholick Church, is most evident from those plain Words of our Lord delivered to St. *Peter*, I say unto thee thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

YET that this Consignment of Church Government to St. *Peter* did not exclude the other Apostles, is evident from the Occasion of it. Our Lord had put the Question to his Twelve Apostles, Whom they said that he was? *Peter* in the Name of them all declared, saying;

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Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God. Our Lord in his Reply said unto him, * *Thou art Peter*; (which by Interpretation is a Stone or Rock) intimating thereby in a Figure, that his Answer was the Confession of a true Faith and the *chief corner Stone* of Christianity, upon which our Lord promised to build his Church, and that no Evil Powers should prevail against it, nor the Grave extinguish. He then proceeded with a Promise to Invest the Government of that Church in those chosen Disciples who by St. *Peter* had made the first Confession of his Divine Generation, and to deliver to them the Power of the Keys (the Keys let us be sure to consider of the Kingdom of Heaven which our Lord is the eternal King of) which evidently implies the Power of Admitting, Excluding and Controlling the Believers in Christ according to the instituted Oeconomy of the Gospel. And as a farther Testimony that this Trust was not designed for St. *Peter* alone, St. *John* bears Witness, that our Lord after his Resurrection so spake to the same Disciples, † *As my Father hath sent me so send I you; and he breathed on them and he said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose soever Sins ye remit* (i. e. upon the Conditions of the Gospel delivered to them) *they are*

* Matt. xvi. 18.

† John xx. 21.

are remitted to them, and whosesoever Sins ye retain they are retained.

AND that this Ecclesiastical Government was *Transitive* from the Apostles to their Successors, is very manifest from the plain Testimony of St. *Matthew*, who says, that our Lord after his Resurrection, delivered himself in these solemn Words. * *All Power is given unto me in Heaven, and in Earth, Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Teaching them all Things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even unto the End of the World.* This Presence is by all Interpreters understood of the Protection, Assistance, and concurrent Authority of our Lord, to those whom he thus ordained and sent to Preach, and Baptize, and to shew Men all the Will of God in the Christian Institution. The Words were also delivered to the eleven Apostles, as it is manifest in the Context; yet nothing is plainer than that, as the Promise of our Lord extending to Perpetuity, did include these Apostles, so that it did not Terminate in them; and therefore was design'd to support and authorize the continual Christian Ministry. *i. e.* In their Ministrations by the Primitive Scheme of the Apostles, revealed to them by the Spirit

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* Matt. xxviii. 18.

of God, Exemplified in *Timothy* and *Titus*, and Transmitted down to us, both by the holy Scriptures and the Practice of the Universal Church.

WHENCE it is beyond every Exception clear, That our Lord Founded his Religion in the *Divinity of his Nature*; That He Instituted a visible Government to uphold the uniform Profession of it, That He Invested such Governors with the *same Authority*, which He received himself from the Father; That He *explicitly* Promised that what They did on Earth, according to Christian Revelation, should be confirm'd in Heaven, and that He would be *with Them* in Earth, to the End of the World.

ST. *Peter* was expressly Dignified in the Beginning with this Deputation, and the Church could not discharge Themselves, with that holy Respect and Charity which his Character and Misfortunes required, without putting up their devout Prayers for him.

IT was the Duty and Practice of the Primitive Christians to pray for one another, their Piety and Charity were exemplary in this respect; for then, there was true Spirit of Sympathy and Unity between Christians, that when * *one Member suffer'd, all the Members suffer'd with it.*

AND as they had a perfect Knowledge of Them who had the Rule over them, and of their

* 1 Cor. ij. 26.

their spiritual Authority, so they paid a willing Obedience to their Commands, and all due Reverence to their Persons, and also * *esteem'd them very highly in Love for their Work sake.* The zealous Affection and Piety of the Church to St. *Peter*, is an eminent Instance of this, when they all without ceasing put up their Prayers for him, the whole Church as in a general Calamity shew'd themselves afflicted with his Misfortune, and out of a deep Conviction of the Importance, of his Liberty to maintain the Cause, and promote the Propagation of Christianity, exalted their Supplications with a general Harmony, and in the *Flame* of Devotion brought down an *Angel* to deliver their *Saint*.

THIS Example, as well as all others of Christian Godliness, was written for our Instruction, that in like Circumstances we shou'd use the like Devotion. St. *Paul* affords us a clear Authority to support their Piety, when himself was a Prisoner in *Rome*, he sends an Injunction † *to the Hebrews to pray for him*, and what is particularly observable, he, in the Verse before, prepares 'em with a Caution to obey them, who had the *Rule over them*, and to submit themselves to enforce his Precept, and in the Verse immediately after, he encourages them to it by intimating, that their

Prayers

* 1 Thes. v. 13.

† Hebr. xiii. 18.

Prayers would contribute to his Liberty, and *restore him to them the sooner.*

AND indeed, the Reasonableness of this Piety sufficiently recommends it without any particular Injunction, or primitive Example for it. For if by the general Obligations of Christian Charity, we are to pray for all Christians in Distress, not excepting the meanest and most unworthy ; much less are we to be excused from praying for the most worthy.

IF also we are commanded to pray for the Enemies of our holy Faith, much more are we obliged to pray for the best Promoters and Governors of it. If we are exhorted by St. *Paul, * first of all to pray for Kings, and those that are in Authority,* to bestow the first Fruits of our Prayers in behalf of our Governors, either we must not pray at all for Christians in Distress, or must pray first for our distressed Governors, when they are fallen into such Condition ; and which the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life, make them equally liable to with others. I have already proved the Authority of Christian Bishops, and whether the Powers originally given to, and all along exercised by them, bear any Analogy to the Administration of the Civil Power, and tend to perfect the Government of Mankind, may easily be determin'd, by recollecting ;

* 1 Tim. ii. 2.

THAT Bishops lawfully called, derive their Authority of governing in Christ's Church from God, and were originally independent of any State, as to the Exercise of it, though since Kings became the *nursing Fathers*, and Queens the *nursing Mothers* of the Christian Church, by embracing the Faith, and giving it their Protection and Countenance, our Church at the Reformation ascrib'd to our King and his Successors, that Supremacy in Things Ecclesiastical, which all good Princes ought to have. That St. *Paul*, who calls the temporal Sovereign, * *the Minister of God*, calls the Persons of the highest Character in the Church, † *Ambassadors for Christ*. That to the Charge of the temporal Powers are committed the civil Lives, Bodies and Properties of their Subjects; to the Charge of the spiritual Powers the Souls of Men, under the Dispensation of the Gospel.

BUT because a Power to command, without some Sanctions of Obedience, wou'd be but of very little Effect of the Purposes of any Government, therefore to the Dispensation of each of these are allotted Rewards and Punishments in this Life, though with an ultimate Regard to the Rewards and Punishments of the next. Kings reward their meritorious Servants by Stations of temporal Honour and Profit,

* Rom. xiii. 6.

† 2 Cor. v. 20

Profit, which their Circumstances enable them to do. Bishops reward the obedient Members of Christ's Church, with their Benediction in the Name of God, and the Grace that is convey'd to them through their Ministry. Kings through the Power of the Sword, punish Offenders with Sufferings, which affect the Body and temporal Life. Bishops, by the Power of the Keys deliver'd to them, exclude disobedient Christians from the Communion Privileges of Christ's Church, and punish their immoral Actions by Shame, in judiciously appointing them publick Pennance.

AND though through a long Relaxation of these latter Powers, the Lives of Christians are degenerated almost to a heathenish Infidelity and Impiety, yet if ever the Spirit of true Christianity revive again in its Discipline, the Ecclesiastical Sanctions which are now call'd *vain Words* and *Dreams*, will have a more prevailing Efficacy in bringing Christians to live suitably to their Profession, than the sharpest corporal Chastisements. And the Favour of the Church be thought no less an Encouragement to a regular Piety, than the Favour of the temporal Sovereign to enforce the Duties of the civil Life.

THUS I have observ'd to you how sacred, how important to Salvation the Persons and Authority of Christian Bishops are. They are consecrated by the Holy Ghost, and with Power to be Overseers of the Flock of Christ. They
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are the Watchmen of Souls, and therefore the Directors of Men's Consciences in the true Belief and Obedience of the Gospel. They are appointed *for the Work of the Ministry, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying the Body of Christ, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect Man, and the fullness of the Stature of Christ.* For this End particularly they have Power to Ordain those which are found qualified by Endowments of Piety and Learning, and inwardly inclined to the holy Function. They are by the sacred and primitive Rite of Confirmation, to receive the Dedications which Christians at Years of Discretion make of themselves to Christ and his Religion, and to bless them for their Increase of Grace. They are, when their other publick Cares for the well Government of God's People will admit, to preach the glad Tidings and Duties of the Gospel, and rightly and duely to administer the Christian Sacraments. They are in every Thing to adorn the Godly Religion of our Lord and Saviour, by giving all Diligence to promote the outward Worship of it in Decency and Order; and the inward Profession of it in Unity of Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, and in Righteousness of Life.

HENCE we may be easily convinced, that the Enemies of the Episcopal Authority, are Enemies to the Christian Religion it self, and

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must, whatever they intend, by destroying one, destroy the other. For *if the Foundations be cast down, what will the Righteous*, considered as Christians, *do*? If the Authority and Ordinances of our Lord, so plainly instituted in the Gospel, be over-ruled or defeated, what will Christianity be but a religious Confusion, like a Kingdom and People, without any King and Governor. And it is as rational to believe, that God will preserve the State in Order, as well as the Church in such Condition. How then will any Christians, whose Belief is, that * *all shall appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ*, presume to violate that Form and Authority, by which the Catholick Church from the beginning of Christianity down to this Time, hath been govern'd and sanctified?

BUT these sacrilegious Invasions ought only to be expected from Heathen Unbelievers; or, if any who profess, and call themselves Christians, have joined themselves to the Aliens in these hostile Endeavours, I must take the Liberty to observe, that they are such who *are Contentious, and obey not the Truth*, and over whom the Mammon-God of this World hath too much Power.

FROM the Authority and Importance of Episcopacy, the Transition is very natural to the

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

the Piety of praying for those who are called to it, whether Prosperity displays the Favours of God about them, or Adversity draws a Veil over their Felicity. Which leads me,

Lastly, To Apply this Discourse to the present Case of this Church, as far as the different Condition of Christianity in the primitive Times, and in this Nation at present, will innocently admit.

I wou'd not be mistaken, to have any View to persuade you, that the Case of this Church is to be compared with the persecuted Condition of *St. Peter* and his Followers. I am duely sensible that we are under the publick Countenance and Protection of a Christian Prince; and who not only favours us with the free Profession of our Religion, but also has himself chosen to profess it after the same most excellent Usage of the Church of *England*; and has taken upon him the Title and Charge of being the Defender of the Catholick Christian Faith in general, and the Guardian of this national Church in particular, and has condescended in Compliance to our Constitution, to bind himself with an Oath, to preserve to us all the Rights and Privileges of it.

ALL that I intend in this Application is to shew, that upon the Foot of Christian Charity, and by the good Disposition of the Laws of this Country, and especially in dutiful Respect to the Episcopal Dignity, we may with a *Conscience void of Offence towards God, and*

towards Men, pray for our Right Reverend Bishop in his present Confinement : And recommend him to the Prayers of this Audience, as far as our Religion, and a peaceable Behaviour towards our temporal Superiors will justify us.

I am sensible the Charge is high and heinous for which he is in Prison ; yet because our Religion teaches us to distinguish between Persons and Crimes, we may Reverence, love and pray fervently for the Prelate's Person, while we express a just Abhorrence of the Prelate's supposed Crime.

IT is not long since the People of this Nation in general, as well as we our selves in particular, esteem'd him as a distinguish'd Ornament of our Church and Country, a Pious, Learned and Wise Bishop, a faithful Friend of all the Churches of Episcopal Distinction in *Great-Britain* and *Ireland*, an Able and a Watchful Statesman, with a piercing Eye of Defence to the tender Liberties and Properties of his Countrymen. And his peaceful apparent Conformity, (before the present Objection,) to the Temporal and Ecclesiastical Laws of his Country, shou'd, in the candid Judgment of all them who have it not in their Power to prove him a publick Enemy, tend rather to remove, than to confirm the Supposition of his Guilt.

IT was * *not the Manner of the Romans* in the State of Heathenism, *to deliver any Man to Die*, before legal Conviction ; but it is not the justifiable Manner of Christians, to condemn any, *before that he who is accused, have the Accusers Face to Face, and have License to Answer for himself, concerning the Crime laid against him* ; it being a Precept in Christianity, *to † judge nothing before the Time*, to prevent rash Judgment, and the charitable Construction of our own Laws, to deem every Person innocent till he is convicted.

THAT an innocent Person may be accused, may be condemned, may be executed, will be allow'd possible in Fact, and what has often happen'd. Our Saviour and his Apostles, and the whole noble Army of Martyrs, are immortal Instances of This. Yet this very rarely happens in any but persecuting States ; and when in any State disavowing Persecution, it is when the Judges are *become abominable in their Doings*, or when *false Witnesses rise up, and lay to his Charge Things that he knew not*, and so by concealing the Malice and Perjury of the Accusation, make a just Judge pronounce an unjust Sentence. But as this Procedure is always shocking in Consideration, so it is not to be expected in this Country, where Christianity is profess'd in its greatest Purity, and where the Offices of Humanity

* Acts xxv. 16.

† 1 Cor. iv. v.

are improv'd into the most endearing Treatment of Christian Charity.

NEVERTHELESS, an innocent Person may be confined, and honourably acquitted after Trial, without any just Reproach against the lawful Powers which committed him. For the Wisdom of every just Government in confining any Person accused (whether by false or true Witnesses, we do not now consider) takes only the necessary Caution to secure the supposed Criminal for a fair Trial. And therefore a Prisoner before his Trial, I humbly presume, is not in a *State of Punishment*, but of *safe Custody*; and therefore may be treated in his Confinement with that Respect and Charity, which were due to his former Reputation and Station, as far as the Honour of the Publick, and the Leave of his Superiors will admit. And the Reasons are, Because by our Laws no Fault shou'd receive two Punishments for one Crime, I mean one antecedent to Conviction, and the other subsequent: And because a bare Accusation, though never so strongly laid, does not necessarily infer Guilt; and therefore is at least a just Ground for the Suspension of private Judgments, and leaves room for the Interpretations and Offices of Charity.

THESE Reasons alter nothing in the Case of a Bishop; and it is very reconcileable to Justice and Experience, that a Bishop may be innocent, and a lawful Prisoner. For we may

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not presume that the Episcopal Character does exempt those who are dignified with it, from a lawful Obedience to that State, which gives their holy Persons and Religion Protection and Countenance : But They as Subjects, have ever been liable to the Treatment of Subjects, to be punish'd for State Offences, (though these are those Cases which *most rarely* happen) and to be imprison'd upon Suspicion of such. I do not therefore plead against the just Animadversion of offensive Prelates, nor the necessary Securities which a wise Government should take, to bring them to it. Heretical Bishops, Blasphemers of our Redeemer, are not more subject to be excommunicated by the Synod, than seditious ones to be depriv'd of their Temporalities by the State. We cannot expect that our Bishop, now under the Informations laid against him, shou'd enjoy the same Distinctions of Favour which a * *great Author* has inform'd us he enjoy'd before, *i. e. always to obtain whatever he ask'd of his Majesty* ; nor to be heard in the House of Lords in his Place as before, *with a general Candor* ; where the *Pathos*, the Point, the Turn, the Beauty, the Insinuation, and the Force of his Expressions delighted and convinc'd his Friends, and gain'd him the Acknowledgement of an happy Elocution from those who apprehending not the Weight of his Arguments, thought it
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* Letter to the Clergy.

necessary to oppose him. Now the Reasons of State require his Imprisonment, and it is enough if he is used with that Tenderneſs, which a proper Concern for the Imprisonment of ſo great a Favourite, and ſo valuable a Man requires, *i. e.* as the ſame *great Author* assures us, *with all poſſible Tenderneſs, and in the moſt honourable Place of Confinement.* I hope, in this latter Reſpect, his Intelligence is grounded upon the beſt Teſtimony, *viz.* the Frequency of his charitable Viſits to our Prelate; agreeable to the intimated Command of our Saviour, to viſit our Brethren, when *Sick, and in Priſon*, which, though not allowable to all others, *his* unqueſtion'd Attachment to his Maſteſty, and the Miniſtry, and his ſeeming Intimacy with both, might perhaps eaſily gain him the Opportunities of making.

HOWEVER, we have had in the Memory of ſome in this Audience, ſome of the Epiſcopal Order delivered to the ſame Priſon, tho' not for the ſame Complaint, whoſe Innocence in the Concluſion prevailed for their Defence and Liberty: And I hope I may without Offence to thoſe Great Men, who by their Office, and upon Information receiv'd, committed our Biſhop to the ſame Confinement, wiſh him the ſame Fate. For this, I preſume, is no more, than to wiſh him Innocent and an honourable Diſcharge, and what they themſelves agreeable to the favourable Tendency of our own Laws, as well as the Principles of Chriſtianity, may be ſuppoſed to wiſh.

FOR

For if it be a Mark of Humanity and Love, which the Christian Disposition of our Laws, founded in the Divine Charity of the Gospel, indulges to the meanest Subject and most capital Offenders, to wish him, at the Commencement of his Tryal, *a good Deliverance* ; We must not believe it the Intention of any of our present Governours to with-hold this poor Wish of Safety from a *Christian Bishop* ; or that any of them have such a Tyrannous Hate against him, or are of so unmerciful a Disposition, *as to say not so much as the Lord prosper you, we wish you good Luck in the Name of the Lord.*

FOR I humbly presume, that the Crown Officer, who in the Arraignment of Offenders pronounces this *Wish of Deliverance*, was Originally directed, and is now understood, to declare the Sense of the Sovereign, and the executing Powers under him, who by the Nature of their Stations, ought to testify the tenderest Regard for the Life of the poorest Person in Subjection to them ; and which we are inform'd his present Majesty, by the Disposition of his Nature, is singularly prone to.

I may therefore upon the Principles of Christian Charity, and the favourable Tendency of our own Laws, innocently presume, that the Ministers of State, and the Honourable House of Commons, as well as the superior House of his own noble Peers, are in Christian Charity towards the Person of their Prisoner,

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and are well dispos'd to guard it from all the Sufferings which the present Laws do not evidently inflict ; and upon his Acquittment, express the same honourable Joy and Christian Congratulations, which his last Predecessor receiv'd upon the Evidences of his Innocence.

INDEED among the more ignorant and licentious sort of Men, we may find some in a very uncharitable Disposition towards him, but it may be observed to our Prelate's Honour, that these are Heretical or Schismatical Enemies of Christianity ; and Men, who either out of Self-Conceit, or Prejudice against the Establish'd Church, or willful Impiety, have burst the Bonds of Peace and Truth, and despise the Authority of Ecclesiastical Superiours ; and it cannot be thought strange, that Refractory Christians, like naughty Children, wish their Governours extinct.

BUT *we have not so learned Christ*, who in Regard to the Authority of the Holy Scriptures and the Opinion and Practice of the universal Church, have owned the Divine Appointment of our Episcopal Superiours, and submitted our selves to their Religious Rule ; and therefore ought to Pray for them on all Occasions, and especially when they are by any means *afflicted or distressed* in Mind, Body, or Estate. And, if as we are commanded, we esteem them *indeed* very highly in Love for their *Works sake*, we shall be carried higher in the Favour of our Intercessions for their *Misfortunes*

fortunes sake. I may then under all the Arguments of Nature and Revelation, apply to this Episcopal See, the Piety of interceding fervently with God for the Holy Incumbent of it.

This was appointed the Sphere of his Government. Here is his Throne, and we justly at this Time lament his Absence from it. The least therefore we can do, is to partake of his Affliction, to ease it to him by a truly Christian Sympathy, and to sanctify it both to him and to our selves by Prayer.

THAT the Imprisonment of our holy Bishop is a just Cause of Affliction to him and to us (whether it happened upon a just or unjust Accusation we are not now to consider) no Man can deny, who applies to himself the sorrowful Condition of a Prison. And this Condition is loaded with greater Hardship, when it becomes the Lot of a Person distinguish'd with high Dignity, under the Infirmary of Age or a tender Constitution; especially to see a Right Reverend Bishop, *sitting as it were a Sparrow alone, upon the House-Top*, and so Circumstanced, that he cannot behold the Countenances of his Children or of his Friends, without seeing them bedew'd with Filial Tears, or veil'd with Sorrow upon his Account; and when *his Lovers and his Neighbours stand looking as thro' a Glass, darkly upon his Trouble.* And though we shou'd suppose him under the Consciousness of his own Integrity, (the best
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Consolation in his Case,) yet it must be allowed an Affliction to fall under the Displeasure of his Sovereign, and to suffer the unavoidable Consequences of lying under the Suspicion and Jealousy of a Christian State, Namely, To have the Mouth of the Slanderer opened upon him, and to be the Object of the Scorners imaginary Revenge, and to suffer fundry kinds of Death and Calumny, in the Opinion of his Enemies, before his Innocency can be manifested.

Upon these Accounts, His Confinement, however regular in Reasons of State, and favourable in the Condition of it, is deplorable, and draws down with an irresistible Vehemency the Compassion of Beholders, and kindles in all, who by the Favour of our Superiors visit his Prison Grate, and upon whom He breaths out authortative Benedictions, some Pious Ejaculations to God in his Behalf. It wou'd therefore very ill become us, *who under Christ are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture*, to be insensible of his present Condition, or not to express it in unfeigned Signs of filial Piety: At least, we shou'd be the first to do what the Laws of our Religion and Country do justify, *i. e.* as Christians to wish that Innocency may be found in him, as Englishmen to deem him innocent till he is convicted by Law, and as dutiful Adherents to the deputed Bishops of our particular Souls, to declare constantly that *our Prayer, and earnest Desire to God for him, is, that he*
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may be saved. Saved, I mean in this World, to the Advantage and Honour of this Church and Nation, for I cannot doubt of his Salvation in the next.

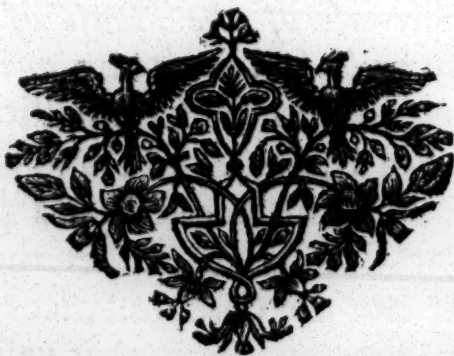
LET therefore Hereticks, Schismaticks and Libertines expostulate concerning his Episcopal Dignity, as the rebellious *Israelites* did against *Moses*, *who made thee a Ruler, and a Judge?* To excuse the Fervency of their Desires for his Liberty and Safety. We, who know that God hath assigned him to be our Ruler and Judge, ought after the Example of the primitive Followers of *St. Peter*, *pray without ceasing*, *i. e.* be ever disposed to intercede, and often exercised in our Intercessions to God, for his Liberty upon Terms honourable to his Judges and to himself. Lest the Charity of other Churches, who in regard to his Abilities, and in favourable Opinion still of his Integrity, have remember'd him in their Godly Prayers, fill us, when we see his Face again, with just Confusion for our undutiful Forgetfulness. *We will then for our Brethren and Companion's sake wish him now Prosperity, yea, because of the House of the Lord our God, we will seek to do him good.* By recommending him to the Compassion of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Consolation of the Holy Ghost; and particularly by beseeching God, that neither the Infirmary of his Body, nor the Circumstances of his Imprisonment, may cut short that valuable Life, which

which the Glory of God, and the publick Good of Mankind, may by his honourable Release many more Years find eminently useful.

So rooted and grounded in a Christian and Filial Charity, let us with a lively Faith in Christ, and an unfeigned Repentance for our past Failings, approach the holy Altar, and receive the Sacrament in sincere Testimony of our Love to all Mankind, of our stedfast Communion with the Catholick Church, and particularly of our firm Adherence to the establish'd Church, and to the lawful Bishop of this Part of it to which we belong, bearing in our Mind that Council of St. Paul, *Remember them that are in Bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer Adversity, as being your selves in the Body.*



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